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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0365
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [SMIG](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: CLANDESTINE MIGRANTS FACE GROWING ASSAULTS

REF: A) 07 Casablanca 00193
B) 06 Casablanca 01333

Classified By: Principal Officer Douglas C. Greene for Reasons 1.4
(b), (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In recent weeks, assaults have plagued the sub-Saharan community in Rabat. In one case, according to reports, a Nigerian clandestine migrant resisted arrest during a periodic roundup and was severely beaten before being taken into custody. As a result of the beating, the migrant later died of internal bleeding. In another recent incident, a gang of machete wielding Moroccan youth, reacting to an altercation between a Moroccan landlord and his sub-Saharan tenant, roamed a neighborhood in search of "black men" to retaliate against. The growing friction points to the stress that increasing numbers of sub-Saharan migrants creating in some areas of Morocco. End Summary.

Roundups, Refoulements and the Death Blow

¶2. (C) According to NGOs and international organizations, there are thousands of sub-Saharan living in Rabat. These sub-Saharan clandestine migrants, refugees and asylum seekers tend to live together in poor communities and keep a low profile, due to the persistent threat of refoulement and abuse. That said, this situation has changed somewhat according to UNHCR Chief of Mission Johannes Van Der Klaauw. Van Der Klaauw claims the police still arrest some recognized refugees during the periodic roundups but the authorities check with UNHCR to confirm the identity of any migrant they suspect may be under the protection of UNHCR. Once their status is confirmed, the refugees are released and allowed to return to their Rabat homes.

¶3. (C) In recent years, these roundups have become more frequent as more sub-Saharans, hoping to travel to Europe, become trapped in Morocco due to tighter security measures on the Moroccan-Spanish land and sea borders. In these sweeps, GOM authorities periodically arrest groups of sub-Saharan migrants, mainly in Rabat, bus them to the region near the Moroccan city of Oujda, and abandoned them in the desert on the Moroccan-Algerian frontier with no means of survival.

¶4. (C) One recent roundup ended in the death of a Nigerian migrant named Osauwense. According to multiple sources, on February 2, 2008, Moroccan police entered the Takkadoun neighborhood in Rabat and arrested more than 500 clandestine migrants. Witnesses recounted that Osauwense resisted arrest during the sweep, refusing to board

the police vehicle. Osauwense's passive resistance resulted in a severe beating at the hands of the Moroccan police. Neighbors speculated Osauwense resisted arrest due to his fear of being abandoned in the desert.

15. (C) Moroccan authorities reportedly dumped Osauwense and the others arrested at the border the day after the roundup. Osauwense partnered with another migrant and began the long journey back to Rabat. According to Pastor David Brown, who assists clandestine migrants in Morocco, Osauwense died somewhere between Rabat and Fez, shortly after his traveling companion brought him to a hospital. The hospital confirmed that he died of internal bleeding, a result of the beating at the hands of the police.

Machete Wielding Gangs Search for Black Men to Cut

16. (C) In a separate incident, in the same Takkadoun neighborhood, sub-Saharan migrants reported that a group of young Moroccan men scoured the neighborhood on Sunday, March 30, looking for "black men to attack." The hunt launched after an Ivorian migrant exchanged blows with his Moroccan landlord. Word quickly spread and soon Moroccan youth, armed with machetes, were roaming the neighborhood and attacking sub-Saharans. Julie Brown, a registered nurse who offers free medical assistance to migrants in Morocco, told poloff that she treated three sub-Saharans with machete wounds on Tuesday, April 1. She said the migrants refused to report the incident to the police for fear of being deported.

17. (C) A similar incident occurred in late 2007. After a young sub-Saharan woman was robbed by a Moroccan youth, sub-Saharan witnesses reported the incident to the boy's parents, after following him home. In retaliation, the Moroccan gathered 10-15 of his friends and began a machete assault on the same neighborhood. Two hours after the attacks began, Pastor Brown received an SOS from a member of the migrant community. He immediately called the Rabat police to inform them of the ongoing assault. According to Brown, the police arrived some four hours after his call, when the attacks had subsided. Numerous sub-Saharans were injured in the assault, according to the Browns.

Comment

17. (C) Comment: While the GOM, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has successfully repatriated over 8000 migrants voluntarily since 2004, estimates of nearly 20,000 sub-Saharans still in the country leave the GOM stymied. The migrants, as well as the refugees and asylum seekers, add pressure on a system that is struggling with increasing food prices, a growing population of unemployed youth, and the threat of extremism. Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently told poloff that the GOM simply does not have the money to deal with the migrant problem. Until the EU is more willing to help, they say, nothing more can be done to improve the situation. End Comment.

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